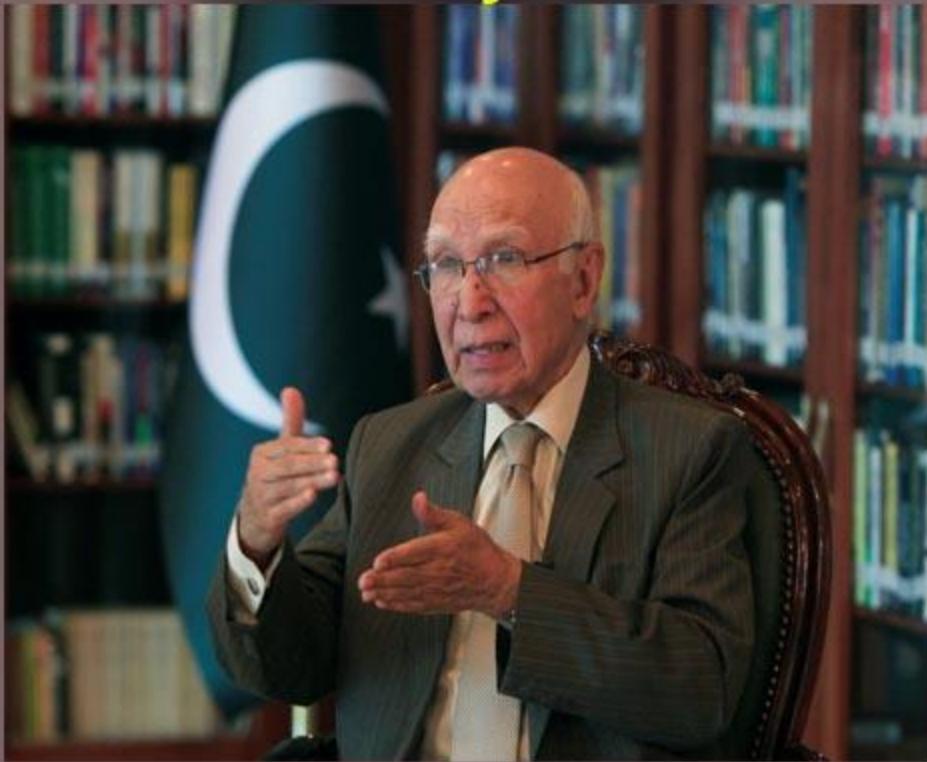


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Strategic Vision Of Pakistan's
Foreign Policy
By
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Strategic Vision of Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Completion of the first year of the new Government is an appropriate time to review its foreign policy achievements and also list the goals and challenges that lie ahead. This review is presented under three inter related sections:

- I. The Strategic Vision
- II. The Main Achievements
- III. The Future Challenges

I. Strategic Vision

As the PML(N)'s 2013 election Manifesto emphasized, "Pakistan today is at war within, while isolated abroad. Its independence and sovereignty stand compromised; its economic weaknesses are forcing us to go begging bowl in hand, while foreign states undertake unilateral strikes on its territory and non-state actors use it

Statement at the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs
on 25 June, 2014.

as a sanctuary to pursue their own agendas, oblivious to Pakistan's national interests".

Keeping this perspective in view, the *first* important foreign policy objective is to safeguard Pakistan's security and eliminate the growing culture of extremism, intolerance and violence from the society through concerted political and military strategies and a policy of non interference in the affairs of other countries. Henceforth, top priority will be accorded to country's own security rather than the agendas and priorities of other countries.

The *second* important objective is to make economic revival and sustained development, the center piece of our foreign policy. A persistent low rate of growth, an average of less than 3 percent over the past six years, has not only increased our dependence on others but also widened the gap between expectations and reality. That is why, the Prime Minister has repeatedly emphasized that 'external influence flows from internal strength'. The Government therefore has vigorously set out to pursuing three major priorities: expanding investment and trade (not aid), resolving the energy crisis, and

addressing extremism and terrorism.

The *third* important priority of a peaceful neighbourhood automatically flows from these two objectives. Prime Minister's slogan of "peace for development" means building a peaceful external environment so that core national objectives of economic development could be robustly advanced.

A *fourth* pillar of this vision is to turn Pakistan's strategic geographical location from a liability into an asset through trade, transport and energy connectivity with China, Central Asia and West Asia. This in turn could also help to re-balance our geo-strategic and geo-economic priorities.

The government is fully aware of the complex and difficult external environment in which these policy objectives and priorities have to be pursued but if there is clear vision, backed by strong political will, Pakistan can achieve Quaid's dictum of "peace within and peace without" in a relatively short period of time.

II. Achievements

One year is not a long period to expect all the tangible outcomes of the far-reaching changes introduced since June 2013. Yet, the list of achievements, so far, is impressive:

i. Reinforcing Strategic Partnership with China: Our time-tested and all-weather relationship with China has been transformed into a strong strategic partnership, with focus on trade, investment, energy infrastructure and connectivity. Counter-terrorism cooperation continues to strengthen, while Pakistan's support to China's core interests of Tibet and Taiwan remains unwavering. Mutual collaboration in regional forums like SCO, CICA and Heart of Asia has stepped up.

A monumental achievement is the initiation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is considered to be a "game-changer" in terms of trade, investment, connectivity and regional economic integration. China is poised to offer investments and loans to the tune of

\$35 billion for energy and other infrastructure projects over the next 8-10 years.

ii. Reaching out to Afghanistan: Our Afghan policy is aimed at building a friendly and good-neighborly relationship, in which flawed concepts of the past like "strategic depth" have no place. The key principles enunciated by the Prime Minister include mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference and no favorites. The Prime Minister has had four meetings with the Afghan President in the past one year. Our efforts are focused on intensified political dialogue, measures to prevent use of territory against each other, support for Afghan peace and reconciliation process, streamlining transit trade issues, up-scaling bilateral assistance, enhanced border management, refugee return, counter-narcotics, and intensified dialogue at regional and international level. Pakistan's constructive engagement has helped reduce trust deficit. Pakistan's contribution to the process of stabilization in Afghanistan is being acknowledged regionally and internationally.

We have played a positive role in Afghan elections, by helping with border security and maintaining strong neutrality. Pakistan now looks forward to working closely with the new democratic choice of Afghan people, manifested through a credible electoral process, to build a strong, peaceful and fruitful relationship between the two countries.

iii. Improving ties with India: It is manifestly clear that South Asia cannot have durable peace and stability unless Pakistan and India make peace. This requires building a qualitatively new environment in which mutual concerns are addressed in a credible way and efforts made to promote an agenda of peace and development. It is in this perspective that the Prime Minister has stressed that the main dynamic in South Asia should be cooperation, not confrontation.

Mr. Narendra Modi is the choice of the Indian electorate, and we have already started our interaction with the new government. The Prime Minister's early outreach to Mr. Modi to congratulate him on

BJP's electoral victory and later participation in the swearing-in ceremony in New Delhi are reflective of his sincere commitment to turning a new page in the relationship. The Prime Minister's initiative has been widely commended at the international level.

The Government will continue to seek sustained and result-oriented dialogue, meaningful progress towards resolution of outstanding issues including Kashmir, and enhanced cooperation on economic issues. The two Foreign Secretaries will be meeting shortly to evolve a roadmap for such a dialogue.

iv. Strengthening ties with the United States: The strategic relationship with the U.S. is being reoriented on the basis of mutual interest and mutual trust. The effort is to transform the substantive content of the relationship, and to change the narrative. The U.S. is a key partner in trade and investment, counter-terrorism, and regional stability. We have endeavored to build on the positives while working sincerely and

meaningfully to address each others' concerns. Pakistan's democratic transition is playing an important role in this context.

Prime Minister's visit to Washington in October last year and his interaction with President Obama as well as senior Administrator officials and key legislators was of far-reaching importance. The Prime Minister placed his central emphasis on enhanced market access, U.S. investments in energy and other projects, defence and security cooperation, counter-terrorism, and people-to-people exchanges.

The Prime Minister's visit was followed by a resumption of the Strategic Dialogue at the Ministerial level, which the Adviser and Secretary Kerry co-chaired. The work of several Joint Working Groups was reviewed and a new group was created on education. We also agreed to strengthen our dialogue and cooperation on regional issues, particularly working to advance common objectives of peace and stability in post-2014 Afghanistan and sustainable peace and progress in South Asia.

While challenges remain, we are committed to deepening mutual collaboration and making this important relationship truly beneficial for the socio-economic development of the people of Pakistan.

v. Comprehensively up-grading relations with EU: Our intensive engagement with European countries—both bilaterally and in the European Union framework—has produced significant results. Trade, investment and cooperation in social sectors are on the upswing, while counter-terrorism cooperation and security ties continue to strengthen. A ministerial level strategic dialogue was held in March 2014 and the next EU-Pakistan Summit is planned before the end of this year.

A major achievement for the Government has been the grant of the GSP+ status to Pakistan in December 2013. This would help boost Pakistan's textile exports, generate employment, and contribute to efforts for economic revival. This would also help address the issue of extremism and

terrorism by creating economic opportunities and reducing the appeal of radicalism.

vi. Re-invigorating relations with Saudi Arabia, Iran Turkey and other Islamic countries: Solidarity with the Islamic World has always been a central tenet of Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan has long standing exemplary relations with the Kingdom of *Saudi Arabia*. These relations were further strengthened through several high level exchanges in the past year.

Our historic relations with Turkey are also being translated into concrete political and economic partnership. As a result, economic cooperation with *Turkey* crossed a new threshold in the past 12 months. Many Turkish companies are making important investments in several key sub sectors.

Iran is an important neighbor. The Prime Minister's visit to Iran in May not only provided an impetus to bilateral relations, but also helped to remove

perceptions and in evolving a roadmap to enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation. The key areas of focus remain border security, forward movement in IP gas pipeline projects, exploring practical ways to increase trade in the face of sanctions, and pursuing balanced relations in the Gulf region.

Pakistan's traditional relations with fraternal countries like *UAE*, *Qatar* and *Bahrain* are expanding through deeper political dialogue, growing accent on energy cooperation, investment in infrastructure project, export of skilled manpower and increased trade. We have intensified efforts to conclude a Free Trade Agreement with G.C.C. countries.

vii. Promoting Regional Cooperation: Pakistan's close engagement with ECO, SAARC and OIC remains crucially important. In the face of changing global and regional context, Pakistan's balanced approach avoiding interference in internal affairs or intra-regional affairs that are not directly of concern, has been widely

appreciated.

The revival of the Pakistan economy in the past one year, as clearly highlighted by many positive economic indicators and also decisive steps to attract foreign investment in energy and some other sectors, have significantly expanded prospects for deeper economic cooperation with other countries.

viii. Safeguarding national security, nuclear programme and geo-strategic interest: Pakistan's nuclear deterrence has served to maintain peace in region. Our diplomats have effectively defended Pakistan's position on strategic issues at multilateral fora. We have also successfully mobilized international support for Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts.

The military operation launched in North Waziristan in June this year, preceded by the operation in Karachi, will not only re-establish the writ of the State in all parts of Pakistan but also counter the growing culture of violence and intolerance.

ix. Looking after Pakistani Diaspora and Promoting soft image: As expected of any democratic government, there has been a strong emphasis on looking after the Pakistani community abroad. In Saudi Arabia, a massive effort was undertaken to protect interests of Pakistanis during Saudization campaign and consular facilities are being improved in many countries.

Overall there is a visible transformation in the international image of Pakistan, which now finds itself in the mainstream of the global community.

III. Future Challenges

In terms of security and stability, South Asia stands at a crossroad, with elections having taken place in Bangladesh, India and Afghanistan, the recent announcement of U.S. post-2014 military disengagement in Afghanistan, the process of Iran-U.S. rapprochement underway, and the changing political and security landscape in the Gulf and Middle East region.

Coming years could witness many

challenges like turmoil and instability as also opportunities for new avenues of cooperation emerging from political changes and strategic realignments. While consolidating the gains made over the past one year in Pakistan's key relationships, as enumerated above, our focus in the coming year would also be on:

- Evolving a joint strategy with the new Afghan Government to control extremism and terrorism so that our respective territories are not used for attacks or subversion against each other and expanding economic cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- Carrying forward the peace process with the new government in India through focus on economic revival and expanded people to people contacts, while at the same time intensifying the dialogue on all outstanding issues like Kashmir, Siachin, Sir Creek and Water.
- Launch several new initiatives to expand energy and trade connectivity with Central Asia and West Asia. The proposed

Economic Corridor from Gwadar to Kashgar will be further extended to other Central Asian Countries, and apart from expanding CASA-1000 electricity import project, additional projects will be undertaken to import gas from Iran, Turkmenistan and Qatar.

- Deepening engagement with the Russian Federation, as Russia and China cooperate, in SCO and other fora, to integrate Eurrosia into the world economy without ideological overtones of the cold war era.
- Building deeper trade and economic linkage with Southeast Asia/ASEAN.
- Reviving closer ties with and seeking new avenues of cooperation with Africa and Latin America.
- Serving Pakistani diaspora and mobilizing their potential to advance our national interests.

The core elements of our approach would remain: (i) constructive engagement; (ii) non-

interference; and (iii) advancement of trade, investment and economic cooperation. We would continue to maximize our diplomatic space and enhance foreign policy options:

- The barometer would be how to protect our security and promote the agenda of peace and development.
- We would continue to pursue balanced relationships, and eschew involvement in issues where no direct interests are at stake.
- In the internal context, de-radicalization and building a grand national narrative, would be the additional focus of these efforts.
- Further improving Pakistan's image abroad, which in turn will depend on more effective control of terrorism, movement on human rights, and positive image of a more tolerant society.